



Advocacy and Action
for Connecticut's
Mental Health

Testimony of the Keep the Promise (KTP) Coalition

Public Health Committee

February 28, 2013

IN SUPPORT OF

H.B. 5145 AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES' STATUTES

Keep the Promise (KTP) Coalition is Connecticut's largest network of stakeholder groups advocating for smart policies in mental health. Advocates are dedicated to ensuring that a comprehensive, community mental health system is created and sustained for children, adults and families in Connecticut.

We are writing to you today to express our support of *HB 5145 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Statutes*.

This bill would enhance the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' (DMHAS) ability to support the people served in its various programs by making several changes to its statutes.

It would clarify and reinforce DMHAS' ability to collect data from mental health substance use providers in the state to be able to better identify strengths and gaps in the existing system. This in turn, would provide the department with better information to be able to identify areas of needed investments and share those findings in applications for additional resources, for example from federal sources.

Another proposed change would clarify that DMHAS may allow private providers who provide housing assistance to DMHAS clients, to carry over some money not used in one fiscal year to the next. This would ensure that people can remain in their apartments when waiting for other assistance to commence, for example Rental Assistance Program (RAP) vouchers, Section 8 housing, supportive housing. This clarification is particularly crucial in light of long wait lists for housing assistance, both state-funded and federally-funded assistance.

A third change worth noting is the clarification that individuals who are served by the Department of Mental Health and Addition Services have the ability to receive services where they choose, including

outside of the DMHAS region they happen to live in. This has mostly been the practice in Connecticut but to ensure it is followed at all times, a confirmation in statute is advisable. This choice supports an individual's self-determination and the ability to create a support system that works for that person.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully submitted, Co chairs of the Keep the Promise Coalition

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